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VARIA ARCHAEOLOGICA

BY MAX RADIN, New York.

A JEWISH SEPULCHRAL INSCRIPTION FROM ROME.

THE following inscription was discovered in 1898 in the ruins of an ancient house opposite the church of San Paolo fuori le Mura, on the Via Ostiensis at Rome. It is now in the collection of Columbia University.

The fragment of stone that is preserved is about 26 cm. long and 28 cm. high. The letters themselves are about 3 cm. high. In the upper left-hand corner, the figure of a menorah is cut, but in an evidently careless and rapid fashion. There are three divisions at the bottom, and each one of the curved branches ends in two little forks. The resemblance to a tree that is thus produced, is evidently intentional.

The inscription reads as follows :

ΕΝΘΑ

ΕΥΚΑ/

ΠΙΟC

ΦΙΛΟΝ

ΕΝΕΙΡ

In form, the letters resemble the uncials of Greek MSS., and show in the Ε, Θ, Α, Λ, and Ν, the influence of brush-work. This is especially remarkable in the case of the Ν which is more tenacious of its original form than any other letter, and does not show curvature of any of its elements till relatively late. Another unusual form is that

of Y, in which, in this inscription, the stem is a continuation of the left arm. While the letters are not cut with especial care, they are by no means rudely done and show a practised hand.

The first line is of course ἐνθάδε κεῖται with some additional letters or words containing part of the name.

1. 2. The letters *ευκα* seem almost certainly part of the name or patronymic. The last letter is either δ or λ. What the name was it is impossible even to guess. The known lists of names in literature and the inscriptions give practically none that has the syllables -ευκαδ- or -ευκαλ-. A name like Δευκαλίων is scarcely even a possibility here. We cannot even be certain whether the name is masculine or feminine.

1. 3. *πιος* is very probably part of the word *νήπιος*, which occurs rather frequently in inscriptions of this class.

1. 4. The last letter is probably N. It is not likely to be M, for where letters have the form they have here, the M generally has its sides curved or inclined.

1. 5. The last line is the usual formula ἐν εἰρήνῃ ἡ κοίμησις σου (or αὐτοῦ). It may have been present in the shortened form—ἐν εἰρήνῃ. Because of this possibility we have no certain means of determining the original width of the stone.

Jewish sepulchral inscriptions have been hitherto found in Rome in the several catacombs which have been disclosed there since the seventeenth century (cp. S. Kraus, *J.E.*, III, 614 f.). These catacombs are respectively in Porto, in Trastevere on the Via Portuensis, three on the Via Appia, and one on the Via Labicana. This inscription, although similar to those found by Garrucci and de Rossi

in the Vigna Randanini and Vigna Cimarra, comes from the other end of the city where similar remains have not hitherto been unearthed. If it belongs to the house among the ruins of which it was found, it must be placed at the end of the first century C. E. or at the beginning of the second. There is, however, nothing to show that it was not brought there later. The form of the letters point to a later date.

Any attempt at restoration would be sheer guess-work. Still, to illustrate what might not impossibly have been the original reading, the following is offered :

ἐνθάδε κεῖται - -
 εὐκα[- - τοῦ δεῖνος νή-
 πιος [ἔτων - - μηνῶν - - .
 φίλον [τέκνον ἔρρωσο.
 ἐν εἰρήνῃ ἢ κοίμησὶς σου.

‘ Here lies N. N. infant son of N. N. aged — years, — months. Farewell, dear child! Mayest thou rest in peace.’

A LATIN INCANTATION IN HEBREW CHARACTERS.

M. GÜDEMANN in his *Erziehungswesen der Juden in Italien* (Vienna, 1884), Note XII, p. 333, refers to several Latin magical formulas in Hebrew characters, notably to one in *Münchener hebr. Hdschr.*, No. 238, p. 68 ; a formula for discovering hidden treasures. To the kindness of Professor Alexander Marx of New York I owe the following, taken from Cod. Hebr. Parisin., 326, p. 158 a (saec. XIV ineuntis). A description of the MS. may be

found in *Monatschr. f. G. d. J.*, 1887, pp. 502-5 (cf. also *Sammelband des Vereins Mekize Nirdamim*, VII (1897), Chwolson, p. 3 f.).

This formula is recommended for the discovery of a thief. 'Open Ps. 51, ver. 17', we are told, 'take a פוּיִל and put it on this verse and put upon this פוּיִל a וִרְטִיל stone and pronounce over it the incantation.

Three times it is to be said about the man or woman, and if the person is guilty the psalm-book will move.'

The incantation runs as follows :

אוֹמְנִי פוֹמְנֵשׁ שְׁמִפִּי כִרְנֵשׁ דִּישׁ קוֹי קִינְקֶמֶשׁ טוֹ אִיקֶשׁ נִיפְלוֹ קִרְיֶאֶשְׁטוֹ
דְּלֶא מוֹטְרֶנָא פְרוֹ מֶשְׁטוֹ דִּי שׁוֹפְלֶא צֶרֶטֶשׁ וַיֵּאָרוּם אִיקֶשׁ פְּרִי אוֹמְנָנוּ דִּי
אִיצְרָקֶא שְׂיִיקוֹי אֶשֶׁט שְׁפּוֹרֶק שְׁבִי פִלוֹנִי פְצִיאֶשׁ כּוֹן פְּצִיאֶשׁ.

It is quite evident from the division of the words, and from the jumble of the second line, that the writer was quite innocent of the meaning of the words before him—at any rate that he did not understand all of them. The *z* for the Latin *c*, is what we should expect from the MS.—a German MS., like the one mentioned by Güdemann—and this, together with certain other similarities of transliteration, would be valuable in determining the peculiarities of pronunciation among the German Jews of that epoch.

We may suppose the Latin original to have run as follows :

Omnipotens sempiterne Deus qui cuncta tu ex nichilo creasti, dolum [te] oro ut promas et dispelle incerta viarum exprivamentandi: idcirco si qui est fur, adsequi N. N. facias conficias.

'All-powerful, Eternal God, who hast created all things from nothing, I beseech Thee to bring to light the crafty

malice ; and dispell the uncertainties of the means whereby the loss was sustained. If, therefore, it is some thief [who has taken this], mayst Thou make, yea, make that N. N. overtake him.'

Strictly, therefore, it is a formula to be used in the case where the loss of property has not yet been definitely traced to theft. It is, evidently, best suited to the lips of some local *spæman*, who would fill in the פלוי with the name of the person consulting him. How it finally came into Jewish hands, we can only conjecture, but it evidently passed through several transmissions and did not escape unscathed either in form or purport.